



THE SKYWALKER SAGA

AVAILABLE APRIL 5, 2022





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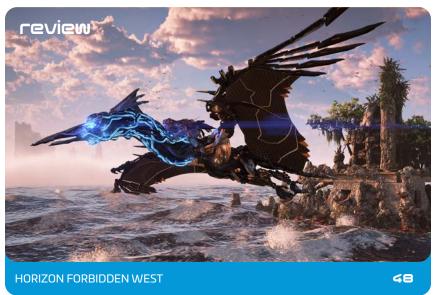
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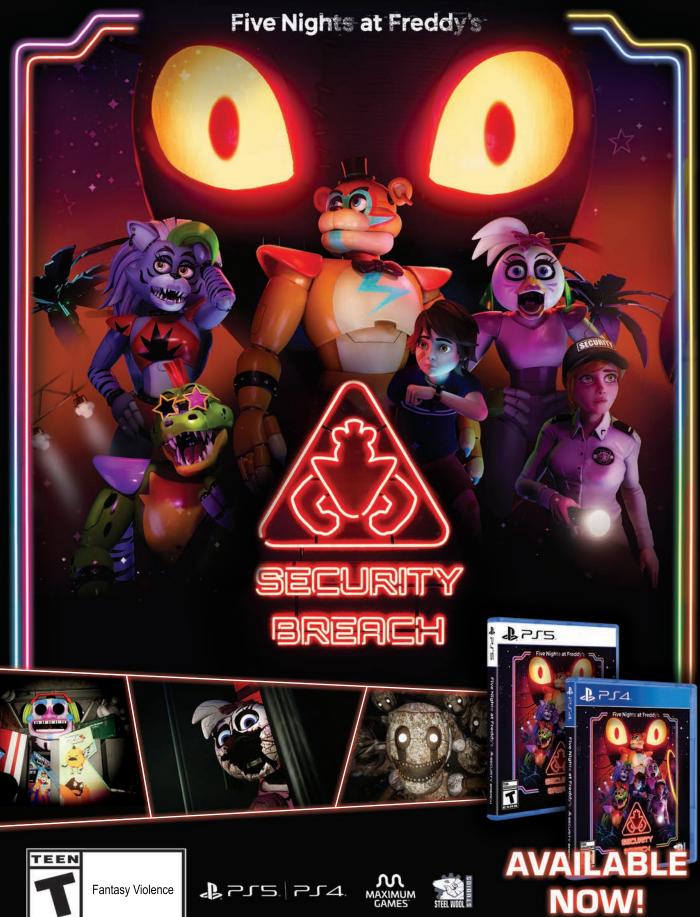












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welcome

FROM THE EDITORS



MUTUALLY INCLUSIVE

s we were assembling this issue, two massive gaming stories broke. First, Microsoft announced a deal to acquire Activision Blizzard, the massive publisher behind *Call of Duty*, *Overwatch*, *World of Warcraft*, and way too many more games to list. Then just a few days later, Sony revealed that it is buying Bungie, the original creators of *Halo* and current shepherds of the *Destiny* franchise.

That the biggest gaming companies are going on an acquisition spree is hardly surprising: We've seen nothing but purchases over the past few years. But what is shocking are the details that emerged in the days since the deals were announced. Sony confirmed that it won't make *Destiny* a PlayStation exclusive, and Microsoft said it plans to keep (at least) *Call of Duty* multiplatform as well—even after Activision's current deal with PlayStation runs out in a few years. In fact, Microsoft says it's even looking at bringing future *Call of Duty* games to Nintendo platforms, something that hasn't happened since the Wii U days.

For those of us who grew up gaming in the '90s and '00s, that news feels strange

enough to prompt a double take. In the heyday of the so-called console wars, companies were all about amassing as many exclusives as possible, sometimes even shelling out big bucks to ensure third-party studios—those not owned directly by the platform holders—launched their big games on a single system. A future in which first-party games might come to a console controlled by your biggest competitor seems downright bizarre.

Strictly speaking, though, this shift has been underway for a few years. After Microsoft acquired Mojang, it continued supporting Minecraft on existing platforms and brought the spin-off Minecraft Dungeons to PlayStation and Nintendo Switch. Last year, Sony released its first-party MLB The Show series on Xbox for the first time, and this year the baseball series arrives on Nintendo Switch. Clearly, the idea of exclusivity has been getting muddier for a while now. Perhaps we're in the middle of a broader realignment, where the shift to streaming and services means the three big gaming companies will no longer be tethered to the consoles they sell.

For now, however, exclusives are still alive and kicking, as you'll see later in this issue. We have previews of three games that will only launch on a single console: Forspoken on PlayStation 5, and Advance Wars 1+2: Re-Boot Camp and Nintendo Switch Sports on the Switch. But if you game on a last-gen console or Xbox, don't fret. Our cover game, LEGO Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga, is as multiplatform as it gets.

No matter what the future has in store for exclusives, one thing's for certain: We'll be here covering the news at *Walmart Gamecenter*, the magazine that keeps you at the center of all things gaming.

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GAMING NEWS, NUMBERS & GOSSIP

MICROSOFT TO PURCHASE ACTIVISION BLIZZARD, BUT CALL OF DUTY WILL STAY ON PLAYSTATION

icrosoft shocked the gaming industry when it announced that it was acquiring *Call of Duty*, *World of Warcraft*, and *Candy Crush* publisher Activision Blizzard for \$68.7 billion.

This acquisition is easily the biggest in gaming history, eclipsing Microsoft's \$7.5 billion acquisition of ZeniMax Media in 2020.

Predictably, the biggest question coming out of the acquisition—other than whether the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) will approve the deal—is whether the publisher's biggest games would become Xbox exclusives.

Ahead of the FTC's antitrust review of the acquisition, Microsoft president and vice chairman Brad Smith announced that "Microsoft will continue to make *Call of Duty* and other popular Activision Blizzard titles available on PlayStation through the term of any existing agreement with Activision." Smith also stated that Microsoft has "com-

This acquisition is easily the biggest in gaming history, eclipsing Microsoft's \$7.5 billion acquisition of ZeniMax Media in 2020. mitted to Sony that we will also make them available on PlayStation beyond the existing agreement and into the future" and that it's "interested in taking similar steps to support Nintendo's successful platform."

There's no reason to doubt Microsoft's

intentions on keeping Activision Blizzard's most popular franchises multiplatform, considering that it's done the same with properties like *Minecraft* and *Deathloop* after acquiring those games' publishers. But why would Microsoft spend so much money on

Activision Blizzard if it wasn't going to make its wildly popular franchises exclusive to Xbox platforms?

The most obvious answer is that Microsoft wants to continue to bolster its Game Pass library. The service recently reached the 25-million subscriber milestone and the Activision Blizzard acquisition "will make"

Game Pass one of the most compelling and diverse lineups of gaming content in the industry," Microsoft stated in a press release. The announcement also boasted that Microsoft will now have 30 internal game development studios.

Still, Game Pass on console and PC is only one piece of the puzzle, and Microsoft has its sights set on the mobile gaming industry. According to the announcement, "nearly 95 percent of all players globally [are] enjoying games on mobile." That figure includes players of games like Candy Crush



and *Call of Duty Mobile*, which are billion-dollar titles on their own.

To check out all of the great games
Activision Blizzard currently has to offer no
matter which platform you game on, or to
pick up a Game Pass subscription card, visit
Walmart.com or stop by your local Walmart
store.

\$1 Billion

Revenue Ubisoft has earned from Assassin's Creed Valhalla, making it the most successful game in the series to date

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Record-breaking new *Mario 64* completion time set by speedrunner Kanno

24 Years, 9 Months, 13 Days

Amount of time between the original release of *Devil Summoner: Soul Hackers* and its upcoming sequel

1,222

Number of pieces in the LEGO Horizon Forbidden West Tallneck set

2,315

Number of possible answers in hit word-puzzle game *Wordle*



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LEGO STAR WARS: THE SKYWALKER SAGA

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MLB THE SHOW 22

SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, SWITCH, XBOX ONE, PS4

13 SENTINELS: AEGIS RIM

NINTENDO SWITCH SPORTS
NINTENDO / SWITCH

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EVIL DEAD: THE GAME

BOSS TEAM GAMES / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, SWITCH, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

TWO POINT CAMPUS

SEGA / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, SWITCH, XBOX One. PS4. PC

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MARIO STRIKERS: BATTLE LEAGUE

NINTENDO / SWITCH



CAPCOM FIGHTING COLLECTION

CAPCOM / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, SWITCH, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

FIRE EMBLEM WARRIORS: THREE HOPES

NINTENDO / SWITCH

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SQUARE ENIX / SWITCH



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SAINTS ROW

DEEP SILVER / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

SOUL HACKERS 2

ATLUS / XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

ACTIVISION CONFIRMS KEY DETAILS ABOUT NEXT CALL OF DUTY, NEW WARZONE

While full reveals aren't to come just yet, Activision has released key details about what we can expect from the next batch of *Call of Duty* games.

First up is this year's new chapter in the mainline series, which we now know will be a sequel to 2019's *Modern Warfare*.



And, along with it, we'll be getting a "new *Warzone* experience."

Both the *Modern Warfare* sequel and new *Warzone* are being "designed together from the ground-up" according to Activision, and both are being developed by Infinity Ward using a new game engine.

As well, for *Warzone*, fans should "expect a massive evolution of Battle Royale with all-new playspace and a new sandbox mode."

To help ease the wait for the next generation of *Call of Duty*, hit the battlefield in *Call of Duty: Vanguard* by picking up a copy at your local Walmart store or on Walmart.com.

CAPCOM BRINGING FANS THE FUTURE, PAST OF FIGHTING GAMES



As the Capcom Pro Tour 2021 season came to a close, Capcom surprised its fans with the official reveal of *Street Fighter 6*.

While only a short teaser, we see series staple Ryu and newcomer Luke—the final DLC character from Street Fighter V—facing off. Both characters look far more realistic than we've seen them before, which may be thanks in part to SF6 supposedly running on Capcom's RE Engine technology. Also, it seems we'll be getting fan-favorite bearded Ryu as a default this time around. Capcom promised that more

details for *Street Fighter 6* will be coming this summer.

In addition, the company also announced Capcom Fighting Collection, a new 10-game compilation featuring some games that have never come West—and one, Red Earth, that's never had a home release period. Even better, all of the included games will feature online play with rollback netcode.

Capcom Fighting Collection hits June 24th. To find out more about preordering a copy, or to pick up Street Fighter V: Champion Edition, visit Walmart.com or your local Walmart store.



SONY WILL ACQUIRE DESTINY DEVELOPER BUNGIE FOR MORE THAN JUST GAMES

Bungie CEO Pete Parsons

stated that it will 'continue

to independently publish

and creatively develop

our games.'

Hot on the heels of Microsoft's historic acquisition of Activision Blizzard, Sony and PlayStation announced a little acquisition of their own: *Destiny* developer and *Halo* creator Bungie.

While the deal might not have been as earth-shattering as Microsoft's \$68.7 billion purchase, Sony's \$3.6 billion acquisition of Bungie is still one of the biggest we're likely to see this year, and puts one of gam-

ing's premiere liveservice experiences in Sony's hands.

But, unlike with Sony's previous acquisitions of studios like Insomniac Games, Bungie's titles will not be exclusive to PlaySta-

tion platforms. Bungie CEO Pete Parsons stated that it will "continue to independently publish and creatively develop our games." This includes not just ongoing content for *Destiny 2*, but Bungie's future releases, too.

So what does this deal have to offer PlayStation or Bungie? Well, PlayStation hopes to use Bungie for "expanding beyond our historic console heartland," CEO Jim Ryan told *GamesIndustry.biz*. Ryan stated that PlayStation has "an aggressive roadmap with live services" and that "the opportunity to work with, and particularly

learn from, the brilliant and talented people from Bungie... is going to considerably accelerate the journey we find ourselves in."

Sony CFO Hiroki Totoki later echoed these statements during an earnings call, stating that Sony plans to launch "more than 10" new live-service games by March 2026. Totoki continued that Sony intends to utilize the "expertise and technologies that Bungie has developed in the live-game

services space" to reach this goal.

On the other side of the table, Bungie has its sights set on more than just games. Parsons stated that the acquisition "begins [Bungie's] journey to

become a global multimedia entertainment company." Last year, Bungie announced an "extensive expansion" to its offices with plans to tell stories in the *Destiny* universe through "additional media," so it's clear that this was Bungie's goal all along.

Meanwhile, Totoki confirmed that Sony's thinking along the same lines. The acquisition is "not just for [the] gaming area, but the multi-using of IP and merchandising of IP—like a game title maybe put into movies," he said. "Bungie can leverage our platform so that their IP can flourish and grow big."

NINTENDO ANNOUNCES SHUTDOWN OF WII U, 3DS ESHOPS

While both the Nintendo Wii U and Nintendo 3DS have offered a wide array of gaming experiences for years now, in March 2023, the Nintendo eShops on both systems will be closing.

So, what does this mean? It means that while you'll still be able to re-download any games you've purchased digitally on either the Wii U or 3DS, once the shutdown occurs you'll no longer be able to buy new games.





There's another important date on that calendar to take note of as well: August 29th, 2022, the final day you'll be able to use Nintendo eShop Cards to add funds to your account on either platform.

If you'd like to pick up those digital games you're still missing, you can purchase Nintendo eShop Cards from your local Walmart location or on Walmart. com. All of the cards currently sold will work for either the Wii U or 3DS, and come in a wide range of denominations starting from \$5.

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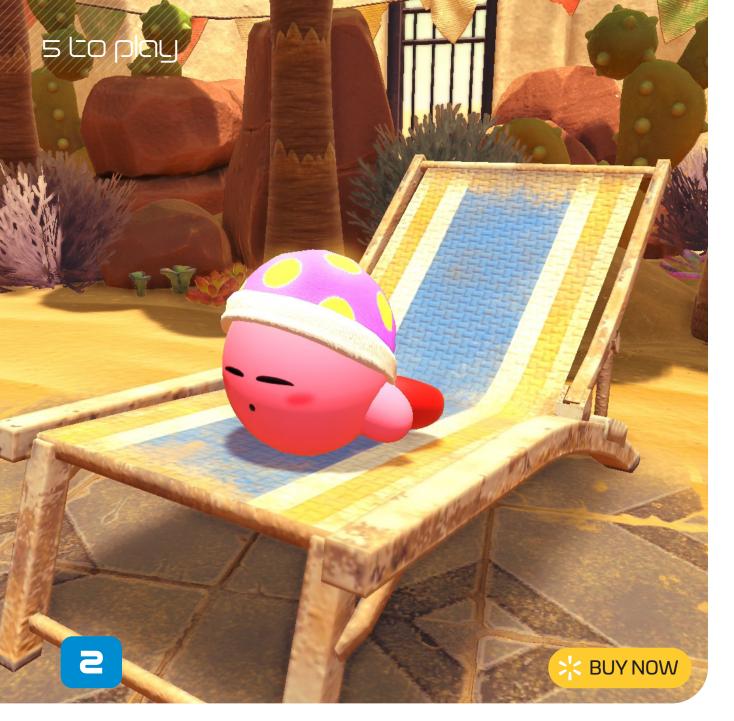




Like the new installments of any racing game series, *Gran Turismo 7* has an array of new cars to drive and places to drive them. But, being *Gran Turismo*, the experience will be far more than just that. For starters, this year's model is bringing back the single-player mode "GT Simulation," which skipped 2017's *Gran Turismo Sport*. There are also new ways to play, such as "Gran Turismo Café," in which you're given objectives specific to the car you're driving, and "Music Rally," which is like a time trial mode, except with you racing against the beats of a song, not the clock. The PlayStation 5 edition takes advantage of that system's computing muscle and advanced controller by adding ray tracing for more realistic shadows and reflections, 3D spatial audio for more authentic car and racing sounds, shorter load times, and noticeable differences in the triggers for braking and acceleration that make them more representative of the car you're driving.

The PlayStation 5 edition takes advantage of that system's computing muscle and advanced controller.

april soss



KIRBY AND THE FORGOTTEN LAND

PUBLISHER NINTENDO / DEVELOPER HAL LABORATORY / PLATFORMS SWITCH / RELEASE DATE 03.25.2022

First Link got his own *Skyrim*; now Kirby is getting his own *Fallout 4*. Well, sort of. In *Kirby and the Forgotten Land*, our favorite piece of sentient bubblegum is going on an openworld, post-apocalyptic adventure. Playable solo or co-op, the game has the squishy little guy trying to help the local Waddle Dees, who are being kidnapped en masse by a group of evil animals called "The Beast Pack." Good thing Kirby not only has all his usual skills, but also a new ability called "Mouthful Mode." By massively stretching after swallowing bulky objects like cars, traffic cones, or vending machines whole, Kirby can unlock some powerful—and slightly disturbing—new abilities and transformations. But while Kirby can and will defend himself, *Forgotten Land* is really more of a *Mario*-esque 3D platforming game, with Kirby figuring out how to get around the ruined structures of a past civilization that have been reclaimed by nature.

While Kirby can and will defend himself, Forgotten Land is really more of a Mario-esque 3D platforming game.







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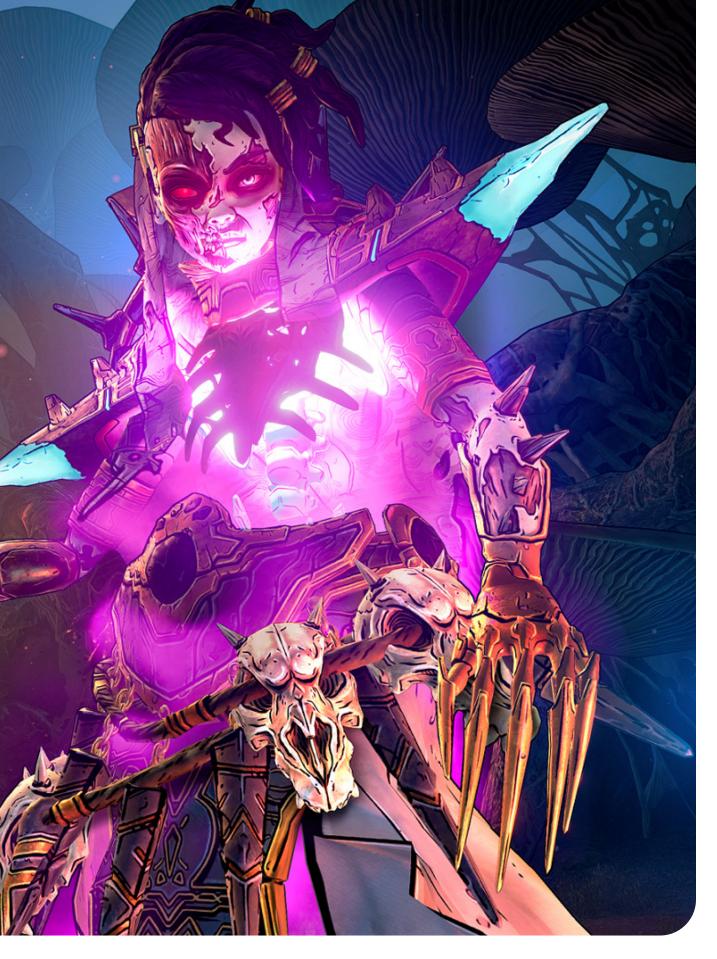


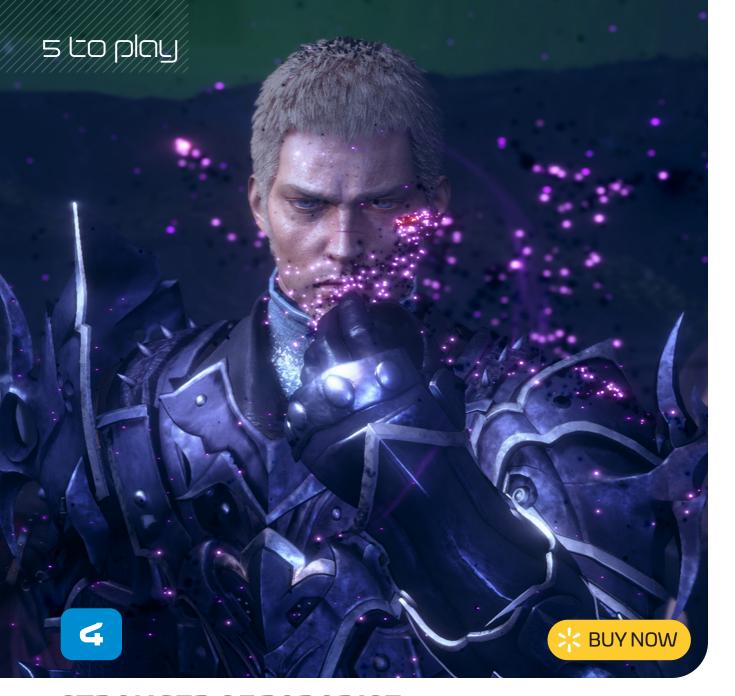


something truly unique and wonderful. [It] isn't a tabletop game, but in some ways, playing Wonderlands should feel like you're sitting at a table with your friends, riffing on fantasy tropes together even as you enthusiastically hurl fireballs at skeletons. Our goal is to make Tiny Tina's Wonderlands accessible for all types of players, as well as welcoming for all types of people. We also want to create experiences that bring people together, which is why you can play through the entire campaign in four-player online co-op or local splitscreen multiplayer. Whether you prefer a solo mission or questing with your besties, we welcome you to the Wonderlands for a fantastic adventure."

KAYLA BELMORE, SENIOR PRODUCER, GEARBOX

cast powerful spells, and slash away at outlandish monsters."





STRANGER OF PARADISE FINAL FANTASY ORIGIN

PUBLISHER SQUARE ENIX / DEVELOPER TEAM NINJA / PLATFORMS XBOX SERIES X/S, PS5, XBOX ONE, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE 03.18.22

"Stranger of Paradise Final Fantasy Origin features a storyline depicted from the antagonist's point of view, and in doing so helps to expand the lore and world of Final Fantasy. [It's] a strong complement to the mainline Final Fantasy titles, and I hope this and any future Final Fantasy Origin games we create serve as a sort of 'alternate' mainline series that can supplement the world lore of the official mainline titles, and vice versa. This game is often framed by players and media as a 'high-difficulty action game,' and those who aren't as skilled at action games may shy away from trying it out. However, [we've] balanced the strength of both enemies and allies to create a mode where you can focus on and enjoy the story. Players can of course enter a more demanding and challenging experience with [even more] difficult modes, so I hope this game can serve as an entry point for people who aren't as savvy with action games in which they can hone their skills."

"I hope this game can serve as an entry point for people who aren't as savvy with action games in which they can hone their skills."

JIN FUJIWARA, PRODUCER, SQUARE ENIX

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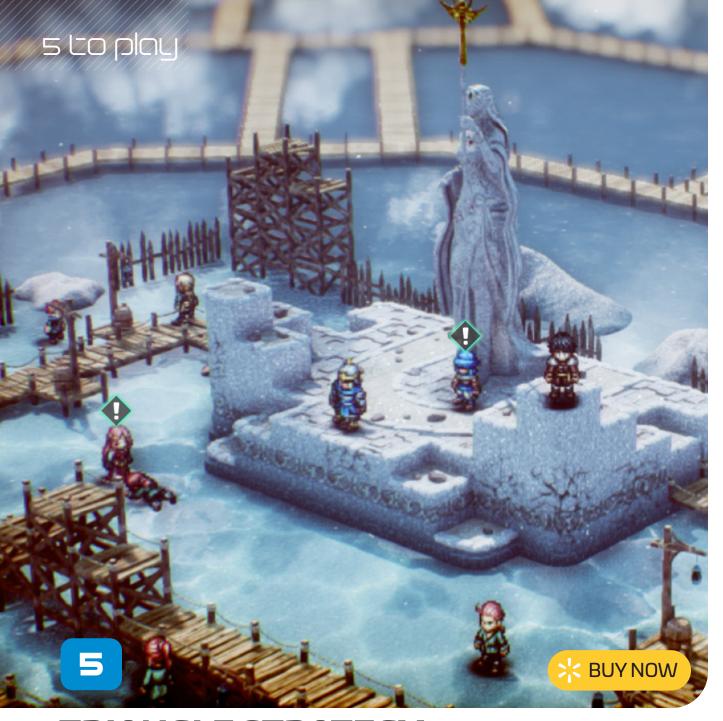
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TRIANGLE STRATEGY

PUBLISHER SQUARE ENIX / DEVELOPER SQUARE ENIX / PLATFORMS SWITCH / RELEASE DATE 03.04.2022

Chess Grandmaster Bobby Fischer once said "chess is like a war over the board," which has us wondering how well he might've done in a game of *Triangle Strategy*, the new turn-based tactical role-playing game which, like chess, has you strategically positioning units on a grid-like field. Set during a war over salt and iron that's being fought on three fronts, *Triangle Strategy* has you fighting on multi-tiered battlefields that not only require you to choose the right characters for a fight, but the right positions for them to take. There are also elemental attacks you can chain together by, say, using fire to melt ice and then using lightning to electrocute anyone standing in the water. Winning battles doesn't just turn the tide of the war, but can also influence the outcome of the game's larger story.

Triangle Strategy has you fighting on multi-tiered battlefields that not only require you to choose the right characters for a fight, but the right positions for them to take.



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NINTENDO SWITCH - OLED MODEL

Meet the newest member of the Nintendo Switch family. The new system features a vibrant 7-inch OLED screen with vivid colors and sharp contrast. The Nintendo Switch – OLED Model also includes a wide adjustable stand for more comfortable viewing angles, a dock with a wired LAN port for TV mode (LAN cable sold separately), 646B of internal storage, and enhanced audio in Handheld and Tabletop modes using the system's speakers.

*There may be software where the game experience may differ due to the new capabilities of the system, such as the larger screen size.





NINTENDO SWITCH™ - NEON BLUE/RED

Nintendo Switch is the hybrid home video game system from Nintendo. In addition to providing single and multiplayer thrills at home, the Nintendo Switch system can be taken on the go so players can enjoy a full home console experience anytime, anywhere. The mobility of a handheld is now added to the power of a home gaming system, with unprecedented new play styles brought to life by the two new Joy-Con controllers.



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long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, an intrepid band of adventurers embarked on a quest that would change everything.

Okay, that might be a slight exaggeration. It was only 17 years ago, and in England. But still, when the developers at TT Games released *LEGO Star Wars*, a lighthearted retelling of the *Star Wars* prequels infused with the imaginative whimsy of LEGO, they gave the world a memorable adventure that fans of all ages could enjoy.

Four sequels later, the team is capping the *LEGO Star Wars* franchise with its most ambitious entry ever: a game spanning the entire mainline *Star Wars* film saga, from *The Phantom Menace* to *The Rise of Skywalker*.

LEGO Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga may touch on many of the same events featured in previous games in the series, but it's not a remake or a remaster. Instead, it's an entirely original adaptation, using the same source material to deliver a wholly new gameplay experience.

overarching stories from each of the movies, we needed to find a way to not have to tread the same ground from previous *LEGO Star Wars* games," explained designer and level director Mike Consalvey.

To keep things fresh, the team reimagined just about every facet of gameplay, adding deeper combat, space exploration, a character progression system, a new third-person camera angle, and much, much more.

"With LEGO Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga, we acknowledge

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the traditions of our LEGO games of the past while also shifting with the times," Consalvey said, noting that today's players, even younger ones, expect more depth and variety from the games they play. "We felt it necessary to apply some of the traditional LEGO game design ideas, which is nostalgic for older generations, and also feature new ideas to bring in a brand-new generation of players with their expectations and playstyles in mind."

One of the upgrades you're likely to notice almost immediately is the

■ Tatooine has never looked better thanks to LEGO Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga's upgraded worlds.



april 2022 **(2016)** 25

cover story



overhauled visual style. While previous LEGO games frequently used worlds made entirely out of LEGO bricks or matched those blocky environments with cartoonish visuals, *The Skywalker Saga* takes a radically different approach. While characters, creatures, vehicles, and some structures still have the classic LEGO construction, they exist in high-fidelity environments that would look at home in the most cutting-edge, big-budget game.

"Our very first ideas revolved around making a game based on the nine main movies, and we wanted to faithfully recreate these worlds in as much detail as possible," said the game's art director, Josh Pickering
Pick. "However, this is not a *Star Wars* universe exactly as we see in
the movies, as it is inhabited by minifigs, big-figs and a whole range of
LEGO creatures, some of which don't
exist as physical models."

The combination of the two styles is truly striking, and Pick noted that a great deal of effort went into making the two coexist in a grounded and convincing way. "Characters attract snow, sand, and dirt as they explore on foot. Prints left on the ground are more detailed than we have achieved before, and LEGO bricks are embedded everywhere in the world," he said.









"The lightsaber combat now has more of an in-depth combo and blocking system, rewarding players for chaining their button combinations." MIKE CONSALVEY, DESIGNER AND LEVEL DIRECTOR

Equally important to immersing Star Wars players in the fantasy of the films, of course, is the gameplay. Whether you're controlling a Force user or a blaster-wielding Scoundrel, you can expect plenty of improvements.

"The lightsaber combat now has more of an in-depth combo and blocking system, rewarding players for chaining their button combinations to perform critical damage against the enemies instead of simple button mashing. For blaster battles, the player will feel more part of the fight than ever by allowing them the freedom to aim their attacks for more precision," Consalvey said.

You'll also notice plenty of improvements when you're in the cockpit of any of the iconic starships included in The Skywalker Saga, namely in the form of more open-ended gameplay opportunities. "Every planet has what's known as a local space, where the player will discover additional things to do such as quests, space races, or collect extra kyber bricks by destroying kyber comets seen flying through space," Consalvey explained. "Not only that, but the player may find themselves swept into a random encounter with a capital ship and take part in a space battle between warring factions, allowing the player

We're just going

to throw it out

Boba Fett.

there: LEGO Star

Wars: The Book of

HELLO THERE

With over 300 playable characters from across the films, LEGO Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga might just have the biggest roster of any game in history. Of course, that staggering number is also going to make it difficult to choose your favorites. That's why we asked Neil Crofts, head of characters on the game, to share a few of his personal picks and what makes them special.

C-3PO



"Because he can split into two for puzzles, but also if you split in combat you can punch the enemy while your sentient legs kick them."

RANCOR

"The biggest playable character!"

GENERAL GRIEVOUS

"[He's] armed to the teeth with four lightsabers, a blaster, and can throw thermal detonators!"

FIRST ORDER JET

"Jetpack and unlimited rockets!"

CHEWBACCA



"[He] can rip off minifig characters' arms like in the original LEGO Star Wars games."





april zozz

cover story

I LOVE DEMOCRACY

One of the most striking things about *LEGO Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga* is just how openended it is. "The word 'freedom' is one of the core pillars to the entire project," explained Mike Consalvey, designer and level director. "To grant the player choices on how they want to play was crucial to the overall design and scope of the game."

You'll get your first taste of that freedom right when you boot it up. As you're starting out, you can choose the order you'd like to experience the events of the franchise, with the first chapter of every trilogy unlocked from the start. That means you can go in chronological order, release order, or hop around between trilogies as you unlock new episodes.

But that's just the start. You'll also find a surprising amount of choice within each trilogy. There are multiple ways to accomplish some objectives during story missions, and you can take a break from progressing the saga to explore the planets you unlock, with collectibles to find and side missions to tackle. And, of course, being able to swap between the game's huge roster of playable characters opens up even more opportunities.

"Granting that freedom to players allows everyone to experience their journey through the galaxy differently. Kids can talk to their friends on how they played through the levels and the different choices they made, so it adds a lot more replay value to discover everything the game has to offer," Consalvey said. "There are a lot of *Star Wars* fans and LEGO game fans alike, and we think we've done a great job [of making] sure that there is something for everybody in a meaningful way."



"We wanted this game to be the ultimate celebration of the Skywalker Saga and wished to honor the lore that made it so special."

NEIL CROFTS. HEAD OF CHARACTERS

to make a choice on who to side with by destroying the chosen starships."

Of course, it wouldn't be a *LEGO*Star Wars game without a massive
set of playable characters, so going
big there was also a priority for TT
Games. "We wanted this game to
be the ultimate celebration of the
Skywalker Saga and wished to honor
the lore that made it so special," said
head of characters Neil Crofts.

To build out the roster, the team started with characters who were integral to the story, and then added in those who fit the core gameplay features. At that point, the team worked to include suggestions from developers and fan favorites from previous *LEGO Star Wars* games (like Wilrow Hood, the so-called "ice cream guy" from *The Empire Strikes Back*). "We often came into deeper conversation on 'incomplete' character designs. Since characters come in pairs, we realized we can't have Doctor Cornelius Evazan without Ponda Baba, nor can you really have Jabba the Hutt without Salacious Crumb. Hence we now have over 300 characters in the game," Crofts said.

This might be a perfect time for that Ewok to test out LEGO Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga's expanded class upgrade options.



MPOSTOR FEDITION

























Each character class also has access to a full upgrade tree, allowing you to unlock new gameplay abilities available to all characters within that class. With four different upgrade categories and three stages of unlocks, it's a system that should really allow die-hard players to get the most out of their favorite characters. "For example, one Jedi upgrade is 'Jedi Reflexes,' where each stage of their

upgrade increases the amount of damage inflicted and the range of damage to nearby enemies, or with each Scoundrel upgrade players can add a combat slide to their abilities and increase their distance and damage," Consalvey said. "Every class has something cool to upgrade and, with the size of the game, it deserves a more in-depth system for the players to invest in their favorite

character classes along their journey throughout the galaxy."

As the icing on the cake (the fur on the bantha?), some of these characters are even voiced by actors who've played them in films, like Billy Dee Williams as Lando Calrissian and Tom Kane as Yoda, a role he played in *The Clone Wars*.

"It was an absolute honor to work with so many *Star Wars* legends

It'll take forever to clean all of that salt from Crait out of those LEGO builds.





when recording the VO for the game—just being able to attend the recording sessions was a dream come true for a lifelong Star Wars nerd like me," said senior sound designer Duncan Bradshaw. "The VO is made up of all-new voice recordings retelling the Star Wars story. Listening to Billy Dee Williams delivering classic Star Wars lines, as well as newly written lines expanding on the story, was a career highlight and something I'll never forget."

Taken together, all of these upgrades truly make LEGO Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga feel like an accomplishment nearly as epic as the movies that inspired it. The team at TT Games is not only summing

up a film franchise more than four decades in the making, but also expressing 17 years of the studio's own history and expertise. In fact, it's almost guaranteed that some people who played the early LEGO Star Wars games as children will be diving into The Skywalker Saga with their own kids—something Consalvey said gives the team special pride.

"We have been very fortunate to be able to create these games for such a long time, so it's always a great reminder that, yes, this is a possibility now," he said. "It's very exciting for everyone here, and we can't wait for fans of all ages to experience the game together with their own families and friends." @

It's almost guaranteed that some people who played the early LEGO Star Wars games as children will be diving into The Skywalker Saga with their own kids.

THIS IS THE WAY



Since Warner Bros. and TT Games first announced LEGO Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga in early 2019, the Star Wars universe has gotten even bigger thanks to Disney+ shows such as The Mandalorian and The Book of Boba Fett, with even more on the way. Plus, a wealth of material beyond the nine main films remains a part of the Star Wars canon: Solo, Rogue One, Clone Wars, The Bad Batch.

Just because these stories and characters aren't part of the Skywalker Saga doesn't mean fans shouldn't be on the lookout for potential connections in the game, however. "While we don't have any specific references to scenes from the spin-off shows or movies within the gameplay, LEGO Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga has plenty of Easter eggs Star Wars universe that we're excited for fans to discover for themselves as they explore the galaxy," said designer and level director Mike Consalvey.

If that's not enough for you, TT Games has also confirmed that the game will get paid DLC adding playable characters universe titles. That includes One, The Bad Batch, and two dalorian. Who doesn't want to adorable little Grogu following you around as a companion?

Revisit your favorite Star Wars locations in allnew ways, from the Death Star to the Forest Moon of or subtle nods to the wider Endor

> from some of these expandedcharacter packs for Solo, Rogue separate add-ons for The Manblast baddies as Din Djarin with

april zozz ສາ





FORSPOKEN

PARKOURING THROUGH NEW RPG TERRITORY

BY MOLLIE L PATTERSON

or Japanese RPG fans
eagerly awaiting more
Final Fantasy, the teams at
Square Enix have been very busy
bees. As you hold this issue in your
hands (or read it online), Stranger of
Paradise Final Fantasy Origin is now
out on store shelves, and it (hopefully) won't be too much longer until

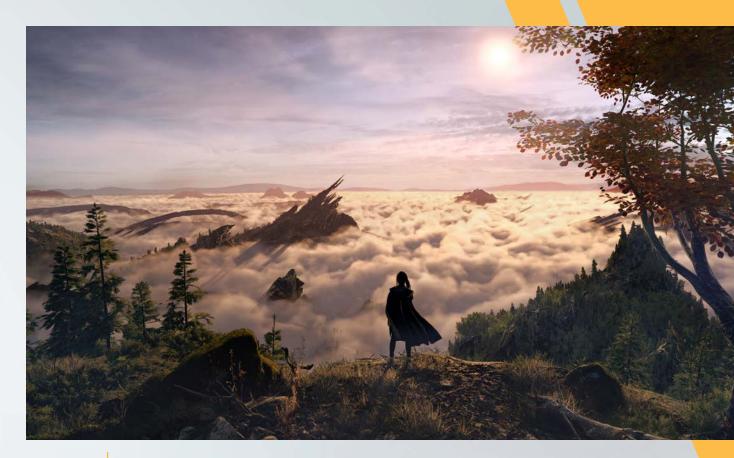
we get the next major chapter of the franchise, *Final Fantasy XVI*.

At Square Enix's Luminous Productions, however, a very different kind of RPG has also been brewing. Originally revealed as *Project Athia* but now titled *Forspoken*, the game looks set to offer a fresh take on the types of fantasy-filled worlds the

FACT FILE

PREORDER

PUBLISHER
SQUARE ENIX
DEVELOPER
LUMINOUS
PRODUCTIONS
PLATFORMS
PS5, PC
RELEASE DATE
10.11.2022



Athia is as beautiful as it is dangerous.

publisher is known for.

Headlining this new adventure is Frey, a young New Yorker who suddenly finds herself whisked away from our normal world to the fantastical lands of Athia (see sidebar "A Whole New World"). Forspoken's creative producer Raio Mitsuno told us that the team "envisioned a strong female lead" for the game, one who could provide it a relatable

hero with "complex, imperfect, and raw emotions." Finding someone to help portray Frey that way seemed like it wouldn't be easy—until the team met actor Ella Balinska.

"From the start, she understood the themes and concept of the game and immediately connected with the character," Mitsuno continued. "Her passion and commitment made us decide to model Frey after Ella, and we're thrilled to have made that decision. Her performance brings Frey's character to life."

Of course, it wouldn't be much of an epic journey in a mysterious land if Frey was simply stuck being a regular-old human. Guided by a magical sentient bracelet called "Cuff," Frey comes to wield a host of amazing powers to aid her in battling the tyrannical Tantas, overcoming a corrupting force known as the Break, and finding a way home.

Guided by a magical sentient bracelet called "Cuff," Frey comes to wield a host of amazing powers to aid her in battling the tyrannical Tantas.



preview



AWHOLENEW WORLD

If you've been a fan of Japanese fiction—especially anime and manga—for any decent length of time, then you may be familiar with the term "isekai." For those who've never heard the word, *isekai* refers to the genre of fiction where a character is somehow transported from their normal world to another, typically more fantastical or dystopian, alternate world.

Given the wide array of isekaifocused stories in Japanese media, and the fact that Forspoken is itself such a tale, we wanted to ask the game's creative producer Raio Mitsuno why that narrative concept is so popular.

"When we began this project, we never imagined that isekai would become such a recognized term outside of Japan," Mitsuno exclaimed. "To me, what makes these stories fascinating is in the common ground we share with the protagonist. When you take a character from our world, one with contemporary values, and one who understands the same laws of the universe as we do, it makes everything they experience in the other world that much more relatable and believable. That's the kind of experience we set out to create in Forspoken."



Forspoken's battles promise to showcase some seriously impressive spells—not to mention gameplay.

While Square Enix has been no stranger to faster, more action-oriented battle systems as of late, Forspoken takes that more modern combat in some interesting new directions. With Frey having no real ability to use standard weapons, fights all play out through her magic, giving players some fresh ways to approach enemy encounters.

"From the very beginning, our goal was to create a magic-focused battle system that eschews the typical weaponry found in most games," said Mitsuno. "If you want to fight defensively, you can take down enemies from afar with ranged attacks. If you want to fight aggressively, you can get up close and unleash a flurry of melee-type spells. Or if you want to





aren't usually one of the thrilling parts of RPGs—at least until you unlock an airship or perhaps even a regal car fit for a prince—but that certainly won't be the case here. Frey runs, jumps, and glides through the environment with a sense of speed and grace that would make most other video game protagonists jealous. Mitsuno explained to us that Frey's technique, magic parkour, aligns with "the core concepts of Forspoken," as it shows off that duality of modern

"From a gameplay perspective, we wanted to give players a fluid (and stylish) way to traverse the sprawling landscapes of Athia," he said. "And

"From the very beginning, our goal was to create a magic-focused battle system that eschews the typical weaponry found in most games."

RAIO MITSUNO, CREATIVE PRODUCER

and fantasy elements.



Forspoken looks to chart new territory in a genre that Square Enix has long navigated.

it's also another way for Frey to demonstrate her strength, independence, and fearlessness as she tackles the mountains, ravines, and crumbling cities Athia has in store."

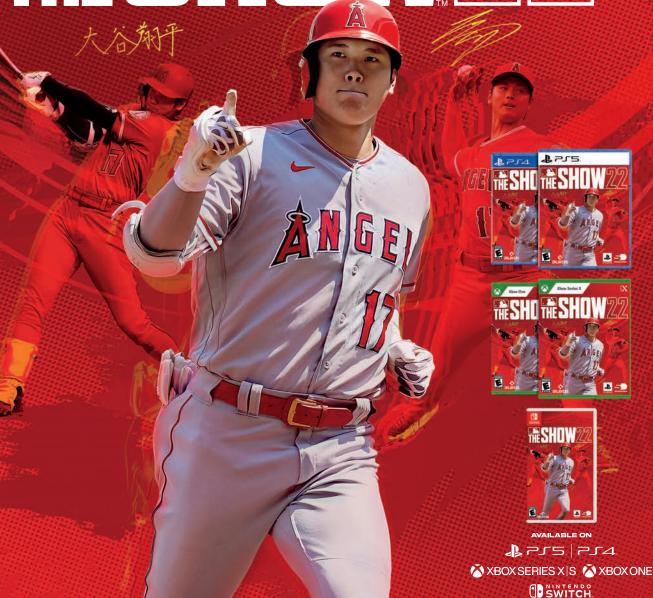
From its traversal system, to its combat, to its cast of characters, to its storyline, and more, Forspoken looks to chart new territory in a genre that Square Enix has long navigated. And yet, at the same time, Mitsuno also wanted to make sure that we—and fans everywhere—know that the game still honors the traditions and legacy of its parent company.

"Forspoken is a storydriven action RPG, featuring traditional RPG elements—such as a variety of gear, a character advancement system, and custom-ization—alongside an open-world experience," he explained. "Our goal was to create a game that has universal appeal, [something that] even non-RPG fans [can]

enjoy." 🤤



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AVAILABLE 4.5.22



In-Game Purchases (Includes Random Items) Users Interact







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hen Advance Wars debuted on the Game Boy Advance over 20 years ago, fans immediately connected to its cartoony aesthetic and deep strategy gameplay. The series had a decent run, but we haven't seen an Advance Wars game since 2008's Days of Ruin on the Nintendo DS.

Thankfully, the Orange Star army

is on the march once again. Nintendo is bringing the series back with Advance Wars 1+2: Re-Boot Camp, a full remake of the first two Advance Wars games in one convenient package.

The most obvious improvements are in the visuals. *Re-Boot Camp* trades in the originals' stylish but dated pixel art for modern 3D models and new 2D animation for the commanding officers. Of course, developer WayForward (which is best known for the *Shantae* series) hasn't gone overboard with making the new models look super realistic. The artists have still managed to maintain that charming, cartoony look while also taking advantage of what the Switch offers compared to the Game Boy Advance.

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER
NINTENDO
DEVELOPER
WAYFORWARD
PLATFORMS
SWITCH
RELEASE DATE
TBA





The visuals may be new, but Advance Wars' classic strategy gameplay remains as addictive as ever.

Speaking of the commanding officers, Re-Boot Camp will now feature fully voice-acted COs, bringing the battles more vibrantly to life. This includes trash-talking enemy COs like Blue Moon's ice-cold Olaf and Yellow Comet's forward-thinking Sonja, as well as COs of Orange Star like Andy, Max, and Sami.

It's not all about presentation, either. As cute as *Advance Wars*'

Re-Boot Camp trades in the originals' stylish but dated pixel art for modern 3D models and new 2D animation for the commanding officers.



preview

FIVE NATIONS, ONE WARS WORLD

The five main armies of Wars World all have different specialties. Here's everything you need to know about them and their commanding officers (COs).

ORANGE STAR

Orange Star is the player's nation. Orange Star's COs tend to favor offense and head-on attacks over indirect units.

BLUE MOON

Blue Moon's COs tend to shine when the terrain is a frozen tundra. Indirect fire and quantity over quality are their preferred strategies.

YELLOW COMET

Play patiently against Yellow Comet's expensive units and make concentrated hits on their weaker defense to get them to overextend.

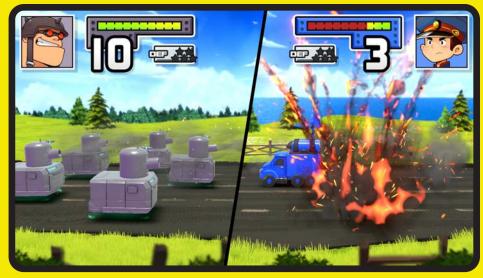
GREEN EARTH

Green Earth's COs each have a specialty in land, sea, and air. However, that makes them fairly predictable on the battlefield.

BLACK HOLE

Black Hole's COs are incredibly powerful and cunning, at the cost of their lack of regard for their own troops.

As cute as Advance
Wars' weapons of
mass destruction might
look on the outside,
these games are tough
and require top-notch
strategic thinking.





weapons of mass destruction might look on the outside, these games are tough and require top-notch strategic thinking. In that regard, *Re-Boot Camp* is bringing a lot of quality-of-life improvements that will make gameplay a lot smoother and, dare we say, more accessible for newcomers.

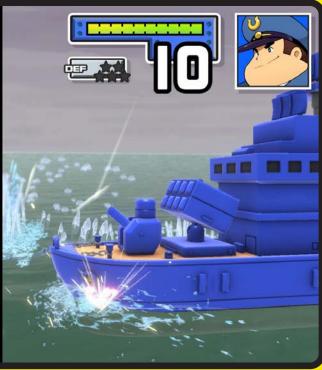
One of Re-Boot Camp's mostdesired improvements is the ability to fast-forward gameplay instead of having to sit through every move. Likewise, you can also reset your turn at any time, making the game that much more forgiving, especially for new players who are still learning the ropes.

In addition to campaigns from both the original *Advance Wars* and









You can take the fight online or play locally against your friends in four-player multiplayer.

Advance Wars 2: Black Hole Rising, Re-Boot Camp is bringing two new solo modes to the remake. War Room lets you complete challenges for high scores, while the Design Room lets you build your own custom map. You can also take the fight online or play locally against your friends in fourplayer multiplayer.

The celebrated series is poised to make a comeback with Advance Wars 1+2: Re-Boot Camp. Now the only question is when we'll be able to play it. G









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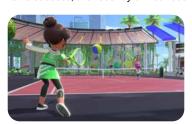
NINTENDO SWITCH SPORTS

LET THE GAMES BEGIN AGAIN

BY MICHAEL GOROFF

ne could make the argument that, outside of the original *Super Mario Bros.*, *Wii Sports* was the most important game that Nintendo ever released. Sure, the Nintendo Wii had some great games, but the console needed an experience that would convince players that an entire console based around motion controls was worth purchasing.

The wide appeal of *Wii Sports* made it the game that did exactly that, eventually helping sell over 100 million Wiis—and possibly saving Nintendo after the GameCube underperformed. Given the Switch's massive success, the recently announced



FACT FILE

PUBLISHER
NINTENDO
DEVELOPER
NINTENDO
PLATFORMS
SWITCH

RELEASE DATE 04.29.22









Will it be as fun for everyone, from the most casual gamer to the most hardcore, as its predecessor?

Nintendo Switch Sports might not have that much riding on its release,

but it does have a certain legacy to maintain.

Namely, will it be as fun for everyone, from the most casual gamer to the most hardcore, as its predecessor?

From what we've seen so far,

it's looking pretty darn good. Nintendo Switch Sports takes the motion-focused gameplay of Wii Sports and Wii Sports Resort, brings back three of the series' classic sports, and adds three new ones, with more coming later down the line.

WIDE WORLDOF SPORTS

Nintendo Switch Sports is launching with six different games, including three brand-new additions to the series. Here's what you need to know about each sport.

BOWLING

Swing the Joy-Con underhand to roll the ball down the lane. You can twist your wrist slightly to add spin to the ball.

TENNIS

Time light swings of the Joy-Con to hit either forehand or backhand returns in 1v1 or 2v2 matches.

CHAMBARA

Hold the Joy-Con in the right direction to block your opponent's attacks and then counterattack to knock them off the platform in 1v1 matches.

SOCCER

Using double Joy-Cons, players can kick the ball with one Joy-Con swing and perform a diving header by swinging both Joy-Cons in 2v2 matches.

BADMINTON

Swing left and right to control the direction of your shots and swing overhead for a powerful smash shot in 1v1 or 2v2 matches.

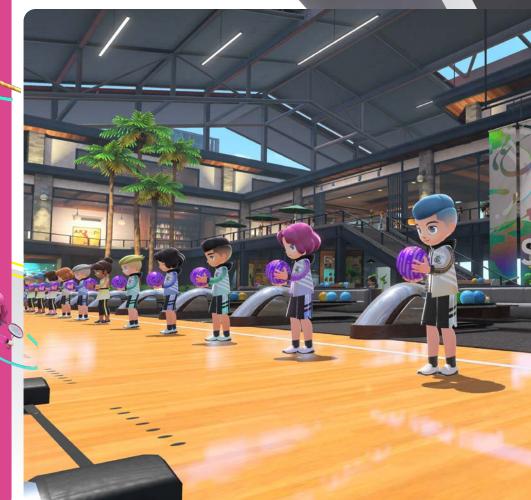
VOLLEYBALL

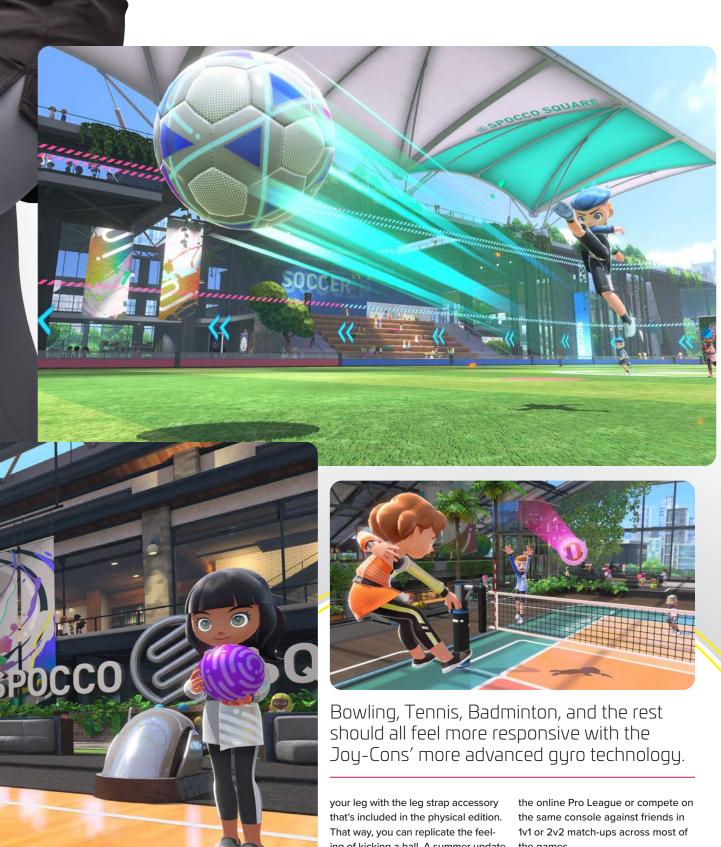
Use a combination of directions and swing types to serve, set, bump, and spike the ball in 2v2

At launch, *Nintendo Switch Sports* includes Bowling, Tennis, and Chambara, as well as three new games in Volleyball, Badminton, and Soccer. If that doesn't offer enough variety, Nintendo plans to add Golf to the game in a fall update, too.

In some ways, Nintendo Switch Sports should play even better than Wii Sports. Instead of using the Wiimote (obviously), Nintendo Switch Sports takes advantage of the enhanced motion controls of the Switch's Joy-Cons. Bowling, Tennis, Badminton, and the rest should all feel more responsive with the Joy-Cons' more advanced gyro technology.

Taking it a step further (literally), shootout mode in Soccer even lets you attach one of the Joy-Cons to Much like in Ring
Fit Adventure, you
can strap a Joy-Con
to your leg to get
even more into the
game.





ing of kicking a ball. A summer update will also let players use this control

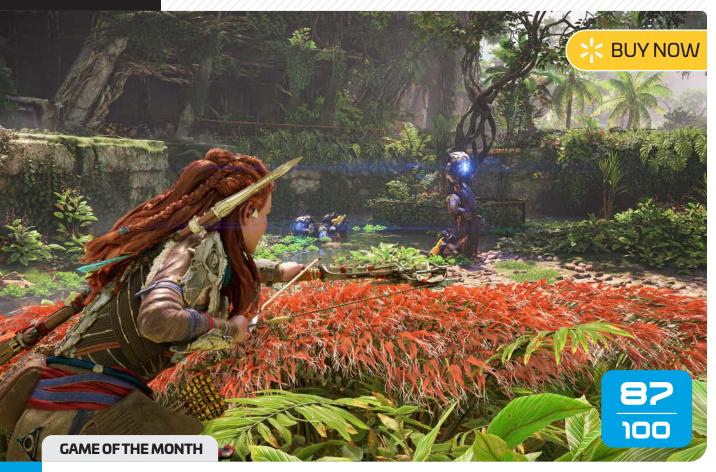
Nintendo Switch Sports offers both online and (of course) local multiplayer. You can rise in the ranks of

scheme in the full soccer game.

the games.

Nintendo Switch Sports is sure to be a hit with both gamers and nongamers alike when it launches on April 29th. Get it at your local Walmart store or from Walmart.com. @





HORIZON FORBIDDEN WEST

ALOY GOES WEST

BY JOSH HARMON

If you're a fan of sprawling, lengthy open-world adventures, Horizon Forbidden West might be the game you've been waiting for.

As a continuation of 2017's Horizon Zero Dawn, Forbidden West follows a young woman named Aloy on a quest to save the world from environmental collapse. It's the distant future, where humanity has returned to a tribal, hunter-gatherer lifestyle and robotic animals roam the landscape. (If we fully explained how the world ended up in that state, there wouldn't be any space left to talk about anything else. But you can play the first game to get caught up, or rely on a recap video at the start of this one.)

Aloy's journey takes her across a vast swath of the west coast that includes Las Vegas, San Francisco, and Zion National Park—all with imaginative post-post-apocalyptic makeovers. It's this world that might be Forbidden West's strongest asset, especially as it's brought to life in the PlayStation 5 version of the game. Stunning lighting and atmospheric effects make exploring the landscape a delight, as you walk from one majestic vista to the next. The artists at developer Guerrilla Games seem to have considered just about every detail large and small, from whips of sand atop a desert dune to awe-inspiring mountains draped in clouds.

Of course, there's a whole lot more to do than simply walk through nature. To complete her quest, Aloy will need to fight threats both human and mechanical in a mix of stealth and open combat. The fights against the

machines are particularly engaging, with dozens of varieties inspired by all sorts of creatures: otters, velociraptors, bats, baboons, plesiosaurs. Since these machines have resources you can harvest to upgrade gear and complete quests, fights aren't just about doing damage: They're also about targeting your shots to knock off individual parts, and learning everything you can about the machine you're facing. For your best chance at success, you'll need to be smart, using the environment and taking advantage of each machine's

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER
SONY INTERACTIVE
ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPER
GUERRILLA GAMES
PLATFORMS
PS5, PS4
RELEASE DATE
02.18.2022

The best showdowns feel like David-versus-Goliath battles that are sure to get your blood pumping.





elemental weaknesses by using the right ammo.

The best showdowns feel like David-versus-Goliath battles that are sure to get your blood pumping. Facing off against late-game monsters like the towering Slaughterspine will take everything in your arsenal. There's always Aloy's trusty bow and arrow, sure, but the other low-tech weapons open up new gameplay options, like a disc launcher that lets you save ammo and charge up powerful attacks by catching your shots when they come back to you.

Forbidden West also leans into verticality much more than its predecessor, giving Aloy a glider called the Shieldwing, a grappling hook called the Pullcaster, a diving mask to navigate underwater, and—in a much requested addition—the ability to tame a flying machine and ride it through the sky.

Sure, there's a whole sci-fi-filled story to experience full of twists and mysteries to unravel, but it's not quite as good as the first game's. The real joy of *Horizon Forbidden West* comes from navigating and mastering its world with all the toys at your disposal. And on that front, it's an almost 100-hour delight. ©



parting shots



LINDA NGUYEN

LEAD WRITER
UBISOFT MONTRÉAL
SCRIPT WRITER
RAINBOW SIX EXTRACTION

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

RAINBOW SIX SIEGE, FAR CRY 5, WATCH DOGS 2

BRUNO LALONDE

LEAD TECHNICAL DIRECTOR
UBISOFT MONTRÉAL
PROJECT LEAD PROGRAMMER
RAINBOW SIX EXTRACTION

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

FOR HONOR, ASSASSIN'S CREED UNITY

Ubisoft has returned the *Rainbow Six* series to its co-op, PvE roots with *Extraction*. After seven years of perfecting the formula with *Siege*'s top-notch gameplay, Ubisoft has given that game's Operators a new opponent: an alien parasite called the Archæans. We spoke to script writer Linda Nguyen and lead technical director Bruno Lalonde to find out more about *Rainbow Six Extraction*.

WGC: Rainbow Six Extraction returns the series to its co-op, PvE roots, while introducing a much more fantastical sci-fi theme than the series has ever seen. Why introduce the Archæans to Rainbow Six? Linda Nguyen: I'll answer with a question: Why not? It's just fun to be facing off against this new threat in a different environment that's mysterious and strange. And there's so much that we have to learn. We're faced with the unknown, and to have a squad with two buddies and go in and explore, have fun, and learn something about this world while also trying to progress further in the game and see how far you can go-that's what Extraction is all about.

Bruno Lalonde: You're so right, Linda. And if I can add something to that, this alien threat offers a lot of gameplay opportunities. The wider range of Archæans that we have allows us to create crazier mission objectives and a wide variety of challenges.

WGC: Why was three-player co-op the "sweet spot" for *Extraction*?

BL: We tested many combinations, and after different tests, we felt that three players in these kinds of close-quarter tactical maps was the golden number for us to create the squad synergy where everyone can bring something to the squad while also needing something from the other two players.

WGC: The Buddy Pass system is a cool way for new players to try the game out. Why did you decide to introduce this with Extraction?

BL: This feature was natural for a three-player co-op game. We know that players want to play with their friends, so the Buddy Pass was a nice bonus to give to players who bought the game to bring two of their friends into the *Extraction* universe. At the same time, another feature that emphasizes the value of the Buddy Pass is that *Extraction* is fully cross-play.

WGC: How did you decide which Siege Operators would make it into Extraction?

BL: It was hard and easy. It was easy because we have a huge pool [of characters] from Siege, but at some point we had to make a choice. Which ones are more meaningful in PvE? Also, we wanted to create a roster that pleased different playstyles and be sure there's not, you know, all fully offensive operators. Especially in PvE, we wanted to support many gameplay styles and also be able to create really complex situations and intense challenges that require different resources from different Operators.

WGC: Will there be any crossover between *Siege* and *Extraction* for players who enjoy both games?

LN: We did have a mandate of creating a brand-new game, a different kind of experience from Siege, and that's what we tried to deliver to the community and to our players. So Extraction is a very different experience, but also taking aspects of Siege that worked really well and putting that in a PvE game.

WGC: If you were an Operator in *Rainbow*Six Extraction, what would your codename and gadget be?

BL: I would stick with the gamertag that I've had since I was 18 and call myself La Ghoul. I will stick with the theme of the undead and probably have something like regeneration ability to survive for longer.
LN: My name would be Gray Storm. I see myself as a defender—I love [Marvel comic book character] Captain Carter—so I would have some sort of shield for sure. ©

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LINDA NGUYEN SCRIPT WRITER, RAINBOW SIX EXTRACTION





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